

Introduction

Serving as a program, project, or product manager (PM) and understanding the PM board process were two of the key issues addressed as the National Capital Region (NCR) hosted the Army Acquisition PM Workshop on Aug. 27, 2002, at Fort Belvoir, VA. This was the second of three regionally sponsored PM workshops. The Southern and Western Regions hosted one on Aug. 12, 2002, and the Northeast and Central Regions hosted another on Sept. 4, 2002.

The theme of this workshop was "The World Of A PM And How To Become One." The workshop provided an opportunity for PMs past and present to share their experiences with the approximately 120 predominantly civilian employees and other military personnel in attendance and to specifically motivate civilian personnel to compete for PM positions. It also gave those who administer the PM application process the opportunity to explain how the board process works.

PM Perspectives

NCR Director Sandy Long welcomed participants and gave opening remarks. She was followed by Director of the Acquisition Support Center (ASC) and Deputy Director for Acquisition Career Management COL Mary Fuller who provided a workshop overview. As a former project manager herself, Fuller stressed that being a PM is not an easy job and is not for everyone. "It's a different environment, but an exciting environment," said Fuller. "It's a commitment," she added, "and the payoff is an opportunity to make a difference." Continuing her remarks, Fuller listed the following current ASC initiatives: the Post-Utilization Taskforce, which is addressing issues affecting PMs, and the Army Acquisition Workforce Campaign Plan, which will serve as a living document for Acquisition Corps personnel to focus on precise efforts and resources. Fuller concluded by inviting prospective PMs to "take the challenge."

COL(P) James R. Moran, Program Executive Officer (PEO), Soldier, called his former assignment—which was as a PM—"the most challenging and fun assignment of my career." Moran shared his former PM experiences and emphasized the unique challenges

Take The Challenge . . .

PM WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS CIVILIAN PARTICIPATION

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future PMs will face because of the abundance of available technology to potential adversaries. Today's PMs, Moran stated, are entering the field at a unique moment in history because of the Army transformation. This effort, stated Moran, will greatly change the Army's basic fighting units. As a PEO, he expects PMs to effectively manage their programs, focus on the details, lead, and ensure they have a convincing case to garner support for their program.

Moran was followed by Gary Winkler, Project Manager, Transportation Coordinators'- Automated Information for Movements System II (TC-AIMS II). Winkler used his past PM board experience to discuss the skills necessary to become a PM. Using the Acquisition Career Development Model to illustrate his points, Winkler encouraged prospective PMs to first gain expertise in a single acquisition career field. This, he said, should be followed by building cross-functional and leadership competencies through education, training, and experience, and by applying those acquired leadership and functional competencies in key leadership positions through lateral or developmental assignments. Winkler also suggested that prospective PMs "be as competent as they can in as many career fields as they can." Good PMs, he concluded, will always be in demand long after their PM tour of duty ends.

Kevin Carroll, PEO, Enterprise Information Systems (EIS), spoke about the benefits of being a PM.

Among the professional benefits he cited were the cost, schedule performance, and sustainment responsibilities, and the chance to have a direct impact on the Army's mission. Carroll added that individuals can substantially improve their skill level and their leadership and decisionmaking abilities by being a PM. He also noted that it's very exciting and great fun! The reasons why people don't apply for PM positions, he concluded, are fear of the process, the misconception that military personnel are favored over civilians, and mobility issues.

Ann Scotti, Product Manager, Automatic Identification Technology (AIT), and a member of the Competitive Development Group (CDG) Year Group 97, concluded the morning's sessions by discussing the history and general purpose of the CDG Program. She shared her personal experiences and spoke about the individual benefits of the CDG Program and how the program helped her compete and be selected for a PM position.

Scotti conveyed several of the major benefits the Army and the soldier derive from the CDG Program. For example, by making a clearly recognized and substantial investment in its future leadership through educational and training opportunities, the Army retains a higher skilled workforce for longer periods of time. This ultimately benefits the warfighter. Another benefit is "personal gratification," she added, individually and as part of a team. This results from career advancement, relationships with colleagues, program

execution, and knowing that you're supporting our warfighters worldwide. Scotti encouraged those seeking a challenge, career progression, increased responsibilities, and a unique opportunity to make a difference in the "Army of One" to apply for the program.

Taskforce

Henry Jehan, PM Post-Utilization Taskforce Leader and former Project Manager, Military Satellite Communications (MILSATCOM), PEO, Command, Control and Communications Tactical, began the afternoon sessions with an overview and update on the taskforce. He characterized his former project manager assignment as "the best job in the Army!" "Being a PM is like no other job that you will ever have as a civilian employee," he stressed. Citing the experience of numerous other former project managers, Jehan noted that unfortunately he also did not have an equally or more responsible assignment awaiting him following his PM tour. In fact, this was the driving force issue resulting in formation of a taskforce to address concerns raised by former and current PMs and the DA staff. Jehan was chosen to lead the taskforce by Army Acquisition Executive Claude M. Bolton Jr.

Jehan stated that thus far the taskforce has identified 14 concerns. They include an unclear and inconsistent mobility policy, lack of financial incentives, and a lack of understanding of the boarding process. Solution definition and implementation was ongoing as of this writing. Jehan concluded his remarks with some personal observations from the two PM selection boards on which he served. "The board process works, it is a mature process, it's a fair process, and it is a consistent process," he said. One of the more important pieces of advice he offered applicants was to tell them to discuss accomplishments rather than responsibilities in their resume. "The board is looking for the right accomplishments, the right experience, and the right training," Jehan advised.

Feedback Session

Special guest LTG John S. Caldwell Jr., Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, and Director,



LTG John S. Caldwell Jr.

Army Acquisition Corps, fielded questions from the audience on some of the concerns facing current PMs. He said at the outset that this is the most exciting time in the acquisition area in the last 25-30 years, adding that the Army is going to require a great deal. To respond to this, Caldwell emphasized that heavy investments have been made in both the civilian and military acquisition workforce and acquisition corps. Additionally, he said that "we must take advantage of every opportunity to better ourselves and to get close to the warfighter." He specifically referred to PMs and PEOs as "operators who make things happen." Said he: "There is no job or career field in the Army where you can get more personal and professional satisfaction than delivering capabilities to those who need them." Caldwell answered questions on such topics as post-utilization, developing leaders via the PM selection process, and military selection rates.

Board Process

The day's formal sessions concluded with a briefing by Catheryn Johnston, Personnel Management Specialist at the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command's Acquisition Management Branch. Johnston described the application process, the contents of a board file, and gave an in-depth description of how to fill out an Acquisition Career

Record Brief. She also gave pointers on presenting a forceful résumé and writing effective entries on both the performance evaluation and the Senior Rater Potential Evaluation. In addition, she walked the attendees through the board process including board composition, the board member pre-brief, and the voting procedure. She concluded with comments about regionalization and fielded questions from the audience.

Conclusion

In closing remarks, NCR Director Sandy Long called the day's sessions highly beneficial and requested feedback for future workshops. She urged those considering applying to a board to meet with their acquisition career managers who can help them make an application package more competitive.

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